

**James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, April 12,
1785, from Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe
Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W.
Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson

New York April 12th. 1785.

Dear Sir

Since my last I have recd. yours of the 11th of Novr. & 10th of Decr. The former by Col. LeMaire, from whom however I did not receive it altho' I saw him, nor untill after his arrival nearly a month & then I believe by post from Phila. I have had the same difficulty with the cypher but from a different cause. The copy of that I sent by Mr. Short I left in Virga. When I sate out for the wstwd. & have not since been able to command it, but shall most probably by the next post, so that whether you send me one or not our embarrassment will in future be at an end. That you may read my first letter I send you the cypher by which it was wrote. Fully impress'd with the disadvantages which must always arise to the States from a free intercourse with Canada I propos'd an instruction founded on the principles which my letter contains, to the ministers authoriz'd to form the treaty with G.B. The committee have reported in favor of it, but the delicacy of our situation with that court, upon that of the posts & other subjects, is a consideration wh. inclines me to decline for the present bringing it to the view of Congress. The restrictions on this intercourse can only be carried into effect by possession of the posts and the more disadvantageous to them, their surrender will be, the longer they may delay it.

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I enclose you the report of a committee in favor of a change of the first paragraph of the 9th of the articles of confederation for the purpose of investing Congress with almost the entire regulation of the commerce of the Union, in exclusion of the particular States. I am inclin'd to think it will be best also to postpone this for the present. Its adoption must depend on the several Legislatures & to carry it with them the preferable way perhaps may be to

let it stand as it now is. It hath been brought so far without a prejudice agnst. it. If carried farther here prejudices will take place, at least I fear so, & those who oppose it here will in their [.] The way then will be to present it to them in its present state wh. may be effected by obtaining the permission of Congress for such delegation to take copies for that purpose. If this shod.. be its course I shall have time for your answer & opinion on it. A Committee is appointed to revise & report what alterations if any are necessary in the instructions to the comrs. authoriz'd to form commercl. treaties. What will be the result I know not, but the object of the appointmt. was, to change the principle upon wh. those existing were form'd. To instruct them to make the best bargain they can with each power, such an one as the advantages wh. they respectively derive from a commercl. intercourse with us, entitle us to expect. If the convenience & advantage of the trade of either of these powers with us is equal, the conditions upon wh. it is conducted for commercl. & other national purposes, shod. be equal also. The object is to connect us with each power independently of other powers, & to extricate us from the complicated system with which their connections with each other is involv'd. A system which they will understand, have been long accustom'd to the exercise of, & to turn to their particular advantages by every possible means of fraud and chicane. I doubt much the advantage of forming treaties for the present with any of the powers with whom you are authoriz'd to treat (the piratical States excepted) for what advantages can we give here in consideration of advantages there, or rather in consideration that they remove some of the restraints wh. now exist, which they do not at present possess, or possessing that

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we can deprive them of. The more I investigate this subject the more I am confirm'd in this opinion. But all these embarrassments in the restrictions laid upon us by other powers, will I am persuaded have a good effect. They will operate more powerfully than the utmost force of argument could do for the strength'ning our govt.

From Spain we expect a Mr. Gardoqui in quality of chargé des affrs. All our measures with court have of course ceas'd untill his arrival wh. is weekly expected. Whatever we have to transact with the ct. of G.B. is committed to Mr. Adams, the formation of a commercl. treaty only excepted. Upon his removal from the Hague it was resolv'd to appoint a minister in his room; Mr. Rutledge & Mr. R.H. Harrison, C. Justice of Maryland. are in nomination as is likewise Govr. Livingston of Jersey; it is not known whether either will serve. My first letter will advise you of our embarrassment respecting a particular affr. upon which you wrote me as you left Phila. An attention to which falls now within your province. It is unfortunate upon this acct. Your cypher would not expose it to you. You will please write me as soon as possible upon this subject. You will receive instructions respecting the piratical states of Barbary. I fear from the information you give me they will not obtain fully the objects which they have in view. From what I have been able to collect here a treaty commenc'd on our own ground independent of any European power, will be most successful, since I am told they disregard the most powerful among them as much as they do us, & in that instance we might plead ignorance of the presents or amount, which would be ac-

-ceptable to them. It is agreed to raise 700 men for the purposes of guarding the publick stores & giving security to the frontier settlements of the States. At Annapolis Mr. Gerry protested agnst the right of Congress to require men in time of peace; his conduct was approv'd by his State & the delegation instructed to oppose & protest upon all occasions agnst the exercise of the power. It is agreed that by requisition men cannot be rais'd upon a few states or less than the whole but under particular circumstances of some, & then under a particular modification. It was thought in this instance necessary to have them in the field, in a short time, to protect the surveyors of the land & as this consideration

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superseded the propriety of a requisitn. On the whole it was agreed to recommend it to the States, most contiguous, to raise them. The land office is not yet open'd. A report drawn principally by Colo. Grayson will be deliver'd in a few days. It deviates I believe essentially from the one at Annapolis, but in what points I cannot say as I have not compar'd them together. The object of this is to have the lands survey'd previous to the sale, & after the survey to have the lots drawn for in the right of the States & sold in each by the loan officer officer at publick vendue for specie or certificates. I shall transmit you the journals of Congress as far as they are printed. They will give you at least the resolutions wh. determine the erection of buildings at the falls of the Delaware & our intermediate residence here. Our dependence for their erection at Georgetown had been on the Southern States &

as soon as Congress conven'd we found they had given it up. All further opposition we therefore consider'd as useless. One hundred thousand dolrs. We appropriated to it. Between Phila. & this place we were indifferent as a temporary residence. We consider'd our State as no otherwise interested than as it might respect the delegates attending in Congress; upon federal principles that this shod. have the preference. It must have a good appearance for the federal govt. to pay attention to the part wh. hath suffer'd most, from the depredations of the war; add to this the province of Canada is in possession at present of the fur-trade. The first exertion of the States must be to draw it thence & afterwards it may take its direction thro' the Potowmk. or whatever channel is open'd to it-but the 100,000 dolrs. are upon no fund. Whether they are to be requir'd from the States or not will be come the question. It wod. be fortunate if a delay cod. Take place. The conduct of our delegation at Trenton was founded upon an acquiescence with the voice of the majority of the Union. We acted together & voted unanimously upon every point respecting these measures. Grayson only was absent. Be the event of this town as it may I think the proportion wh. will fall to our State will be well dispos'd of if it annexes the Idea of stability to our councils & measures. I cod. Wish no more movements untill we take our final position.

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I send you this by Colo. Smith, Secry. to the legation

for London. Mr. Trumbull only was his competitor. He was formerly an Aid de Camp to Genl. Washington. He is desirous of being known to you & as I hear from every person who knows him a fair & respectable character, I take the liberty to present these circumstances in his favor to your knowledge.

Be assur'd I shall pay particular attention to that circumstance which is more personally interesting to yrself mention'd in your first letter. What can or will be done is incertain but satisfied of the justice of the measure, I shall with the utmost pleasure seek the attainment of it in a manner wh. will be most delicate & honorable to you. Indeed I think all our Ministers shod. have 5 or 600 £ stirg. more annually. I thank you for subscribing for me for the Encyclopedia. I have not at present the money but will send it as soon as possible. I sincerely wish it were in my power to join you this summer but it is impossible. The next I have it in contemplation & shall then be under no necessity to hurry myself so quickly back, & I cod. Wish to remn. in Europe, if I ever visit it, at least 12 months. Col. Smith hath my instruction not to send this by post but some safe hand provided he doth not deliver it himself. Whether Congress will or not adjourn during the summer is incertain. I think they shod. not, but the fact is our application to business hath been so close during the winter that we wish a

relaxation. I think Congress shod. sit untill our affrs. with every for: power were finally & most amicably settl'd; and untill the commerce of the Union was properly regulated. The confederacy might then stand secure & not be exposed to injury or danger. Mr. Butler, Walcot & A. Lee were on the Indian treaty at fort Stanwix; the State of N. York also held a treaty; they quarell'd with the comrs. of N. York & disgusted the State. This is attributed to one of those gentn. only. Mr. Mercer hath been absent since we left Trenton & hath married Miss Sprigg. Mr. Read hath been less active than at Annapolis-he is sd. to be engag'd to K. Vanhorne of this place, he left this for So. Carolina 2 months since it is sd. to prepare matters for this event. A Mr. Carbonneau from the Kaskaskias petiton'd Congress

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to take the people under their protection; a committee hath reported wh. is so far adopted that a comr. be appointed to repair thither, instructed &c. Mr. A. Lee is in nomination. The three comrs. of the treasury elected at Annapolis declin'd serving, in consequence of wh. Gervais, Osgood & a Walter Livingston were elected. Gervais

hath declin'd & Mr. A. Lee who hath upon every occasion been a candidate is agn. in nomination. Mercer & himself were in nomination at Trenton & we gave the former preference. The fact is we can get none better than Mr. A. L. & shall upon this occasion vote for him.

Your letters still contain doubts of the event of the interfering claims between the Emperor & the Netherlands. Mr. V. Berckel hath presented a full & able statement of those of the U. Neth: & of the progress of either party to the commenc'ment of the winter in support of their pretensions. A war between them cannot be injurious to us; provided our merchts. have enterprise as we stand on neutral ground, they may turn it to their & the genl. advantage. Believe me, etc. Jas. Monroe

P.S. The alteration wh. this report proposes in the whole system of our govt. will be great. It is in fact a radical change of it. I beg of you to write your sentiments fully on it. If it is carried it can only be by thorough investigation and a conviction carried to the minds of every citizen that it is right. The slower it moves on therefore in my opinion the better.

RC (Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress).